

a risk of using warfarin, research has shown that you would need to suffer approximately 290 falls per year before the risk of a severe bleed due to a fall is greater than your risk of stroke.

### 6 Are there any side effects?

A small number of people taking warfarin may experience side effects such as skin irritation or some hair loss, however, for the majority of users, warfarin is easily tolerated.

### 7 Will it improve my AF?

No, warfarin is prescribed to reduce the risk of stroke in Atrial Fibrillation, it does not affect the heart's rhythm or rate.

### 8 Will I need to change my diet?

A healthy balanced diet will benefit your general health, and taking warfarin should not stop you from eating a variety of food items. Vitamin K, most often found in root and leafy green vegetables, will affect your body's response to warfarin but you should not need to change your diet if it is already rich in vegetables, however it is important you try to eat the same quantity of 'types' of foods each week. For example, if you usually eat four portions of dark green vegetables, try to do this each week. This is helpful with all foods and drink. It is important to discuss with your doctor if you wish to change your diet considerably or commence health supplements. An information, Fact Sheet, 'Warfarin and Diet' is available from AFA.

### 9 Should I avoid any particular food or drink?

Yes, you should avoid cranberry juice and grapefruits.

### 10 Will changes in medicines affect my INR levels?

Being on both warfarin and other medications which may effect its absorption into your body, will not be a problem when they are taken long term; however, when you first initiate a new drug or need to take a short course of medication, then you will need to have more frequent INR checks. It is always advisable to inform a doctor and pharmacist that you are taking warfarin. An information Fact Sheet 'Warfarin and Other Medications' is available from AFA.



## Warfarin and Atrial Fibrillation

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## 1 Why do I need to take warfarin?

Warfarin is an anticoagulant tablet which works to slow the clotting ability of the blood. Research has shown that some people, diagnosed with Atrial Fibrillation (AF) are at an increased risk from stroke. It is important that an individual's risk factors must be assessed.

The 'CHADS<sub>2</sub>' score system may be used for this:

A person is regarded as 'low risk' with a score of 0; 'moderate' with a score of 1 or 'high risk' if their score is 2 or more. High risk patients would benefit from warfarin, whilst moderate risk patients have been recommended 'warfarin' or 'aspirin' although the benefits of the aspirin

are questioned - hence warfarin is suggested rather than aspirin. Low risk patients may be treated with aspirin or no antithrombotic therapy.

Question	Points	Your Score
Are you over 75?	1	
Do you have high blood pressure?	1	
Do you have diabetes?	1	
Do you have heart failure?	1	
Have you suffered a stroke (even a mild stroke)?	2	
Total	-	

## 2 Am I at risk of bleeding?

Statistically, if 100 people who had AF took warfarin for one year and were correctly monitored, only one would suffer a significant bleed. However, if the same 100 who were advised to take warfarin, did not, then in one year 3 – 4 patients assessed as 'moderate risk' would suffer a stroke and a possible 8 – 12 patients assessed as 'high risk' would suffer a stroke.

## 3 How is warfarin prescribed?

You will need to take your dose of warfarin once per day. The amount you take will be decided following regular blood tests to check your 'INR' (International

Normalised Ratio) and may change in order to suit the way your body absorbs and eliminates warfarin.

## 4 Will it make me bruise?

Taking warfarin will make you more prone to bruising. However if this suddenly seems to become worse, then your doctor should be informed.

## 5 Is it dangerous if I fall over?

If you scratch or graze yourself, you will notice you bleed a little more and it will be slower to clot. So you will need to apply pressure to the cut for longer to make it stop bleeding. However, occasional falls should not place you at too high